

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-7 and 30-37 are currently pending. Claims 1-7 and 30-36 have been amended; and Claim 37 has been added by the present amendment. The changes and additions to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-7 and 30-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over European Patent Application No. EP 0768582 A1 to Ogura (hereinafter “the ‘582 application”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,815,652 to Ote et al. (hereinafter “the ‘652 patent”).

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the interview granted Applicants’ representative on July 20, 2005, at which time a proposed amendment to Claim 1 was discussed. In particular, the Examiner indicated that amending Claim 1 to be directed to a plurality of printers or copiers, rather than a plurality of image forming devices, would overcome the outstanding rejection of the claims. Moreover, the Examiner indicated that the claimed “process periodically initiated” should be amended to clarify that the detection is periodically initiated. However, no agreement on the patentability of the claims was reached, pending the Examiner’s further consideration of the claims upon formal submission of a response to the outstanding Office Action.

Amended Claim 1 is directed to an image forming device management system, comprising: (1) a plurality of image forming devices; (2) a central service station for providing a maintenance service for the image forming devices; and (3) a communication control unit connected to each of the image forming devices by a signal line, the

communication control unit connecting one of the image forming devices to the central service station by a communication network. Further, Claim 1 recites that each of the image forming devices is configured to detect a signal line separation from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit over a predetermined period, the detection being periodically performed by each of the image forming devices, and to display a signal line separation message when the image forming device detects the signal line separation from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit over the predetermined period. Further, Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that each image forming device is one of a printer, a copier, and a facsimile machine. The changes to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.²

Regarding the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103, the Office Action asserts that the '582 application discloses everything in Claim 1 with the exception of each image forming device being configured to detect a transmission fault through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices, and relies on the '652 patent to remedy that deficiency.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-6) is rendered moot by the present amendment to Claim 1.

The '582 application is directed to an image forming device management system for managing a plurality of image forming devices using an administrative device connected through a communication control unit to the image forming devices. However, as admitted in the Office Action, the '582 application fails to disclose image forming devices configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the '582 application fails to

² See, e.g., Figures 1 and 2 and the discussion related thereto in the specification.

disclose that each of the image forming devices is configured to detect a signal line separation from at least one of the central service station and communication control unit over a predetermined period, the detection being periodically performed by each of the image forming devices, as recited in amended Claim 1.

The '652 patent is directed to a computer management system that includes an agent 17 connected to a computer to be managed 10 for executing instructions on the computer to be managed 10. Further, the '652 patent discloses that the system includes a service processor board having a processor independent from the computer to be managed 10 for monitoring faults in the computer to be managed 10 and for controlling power to the computer to be managed 10. In addition, the '652 patent discloses that the fault monitor 12111 continuously monitors the fault signal from the housing temperature sensor of the main unit to inform the occurrence of a fault to the fault event generator 12112, and that such faults are logged. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the '652 patent fails to disclose that each of the image forming devices is configured to detect a signal line separation from at least one of a central service station and a communication control unit over a predetermined period, the detection being periodically performed by each of the image forming devices, wherein each image forming device is one of a printer, a copier, and a facsimile machine, as recited in amended Claim 1. Further, Applicants respectfully submit that the '652's patent disclosure of a computer sending the schedule information, which is used to automatically turn the computer to be managed 10 on and off on a particular schedule, is unrelated to the detection of a signal line separation in an image forming device being one of a printer, a copier, and a facsimile machine, as recited in amended Claim 1.

Accordingly, no matter how the teachings of the '582 application and the '652 patent are combined, the combination does not teach or suggest that each of the image forming devices is configured to detect a signal line separation from at least one of the central service

station and the communication control unit over a predetermined period, the detection being periodically performed by each of the image forming devices, wherein each image forming device is one of a printer, a copier, and a facsimile machine, as recited in amended Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-6) patentably define over any proper combination of the '582 application and the '652 patent.

Claims 7, 30, and 36 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in Claim 1. Moreover, Claims 7, 30, and 36 have been amended in a manner analogous to the amendment to Claim 1. Accordingly, for the reasons stated above for the patentability of Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of Claims 7, 30, and 36 (and all associated dependent claims) are rendered moot by the present amendment to Claims 7, 30, and 36.

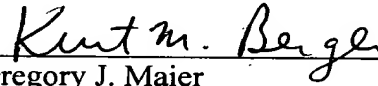
The present amendment also sets forth new Claim 37 for examination on the merits. New Claim 37, which depends from Claim 1, recites that each of the image forming devices is configured to detect directly the signal line separation, without receiving a report from a second device that indicates that the signal line separation was detected by the second device. Claim 37 is supported by the originally filed specification and does not add new matter.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 1, 7, 30, and 36 (and all associated dependent claims) patentably define over any proper combination of the '582 application and the '652 patent.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599
Kurt M. Berger, Ph.D.
Registration No. 51,461

Customer Number

22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000

Fax: (703) 413 -2220

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